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ABSTRACT

Teachers unknowingly carry certain ideologies, preconceived roles, rules, value systems, and world views into the classroom. These notions are communicated to the student by the teacher's language style, comments, body language and gestures, use and organization of things in the classroom, and choice and use of teaching methods and materials. The ideologies may be overt, covert, erratic and ambiguous, or confrontational. Language teaching is influenced by two archetypal traditions: the marketplace tradition, in which language use is dominated by simple necessity and is largely unstructured, and the monastery tradition, in which education in general and language learning in particular occur for formal social and cultural reasons in structured, homogeneous settings. Much of the teacher's ideology derives from his experience with classrooms and schools and the degree to which it relates to one or the other of these traditions, with the priorities of teacher, student, and materials arranged linearly. An alternative is for the teacher to value his own role, the student, and the book equally, establishing and maintaining an equilibrium and avoiding the usual conflict situation between the two traditions. (MSE)

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TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)."

Where do YOU stand in the classroom?

—a consideration of roles, rules and priorities in the language classroom

Tom McArthur

When I was a small boy growing up in Scotland, I developed the conviction that Glasgow was the centre of the universe. I had no doubts about this. Most of the people present here today also had no doubts, when you were five or six years old, that the centre of the universe lay in Mechanicsburg, Pennsylvania, or Moose Jaw, Saskatchewan, or wherever you first saw the light of day.

In these matters, we were, all of us, confirming Jean Piaget, Erich Fromm and other researchers in their theories of human development.[1] I am talking here, of course, about the egocentricity of the very young, developing from a vague awareness of self alone, to self with mother, then self with family, then the point when the self could link up with the general local environment. In the process of my identification with Glasgow, of course, I unreflectingly accepted the kind of *language* that that city had to offer *me*, a child of the working class.

In order to establish how things were for children like me at that time and in that place, and also to highlight some of the things I want to discuss in this paper, I would like to share with you a few choice items from the mythology of my home town. The first of these is set in a classroom in an elementary school. There is a cast of two: a well-intentioned lady teacher and an archetypal small boy whom we can call Wee Jimmy. The teacher is equipped, among other things, with a pointer and a wall-chart with pictures of animals on it. Using the pointer, the teacher indicates one particular animal on the chart, an animal with four legs and a willingness to wag its tail. The dialogue is as follows:

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[1]See, among others:
Jean Piaget—*Problèmes de psychologie génétique* (Paris: Denoël, 1972) tr. by Arnold Rosin as *The child and reality: problems of genetic psychology* (London & New York: Penguin, 1976)
Erich Fromm—*Psychoanalysis and Religion* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1950)
Margaret Donaldson—*Children's Minds* (London: Fontana/Collins, 1978)

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"And what is this animal called, Jimmy?"
"Please, Miss, that's a dug, Miss."
Frown.
"No, no, Jimmy. It's not a *dug*. It's a *dog*."
Pause.
"That's funny. It looks like a dug."

This apocryphal tale has a fair amount of sociolinguistic dynamite packed into it. For the moment, however, I would like to take only one aspect of it: the role of *teacher as social engineer*. The lady here represents certain social and linguistic values and expectations. In terms of these values and expectations much of what Wee Jimmy is, does, says and thinks is deviant, if not downright vulgar and inferior. Wee Jimmy, however, only becomes aware of this slowly and after considerable exposure to a number of teachers all more or less following the same line. At first, as in our story, he is just puzzled. Following Piaget, he tries to adapt to a *dug* that is also a *dog*. He either assimilates or accommodates the new reality, arriving in due course at something like; "In school a *dug* has to be a *dog*, or the teacher will be angry."

Jimmy does of course at length become aware that there is more to it than that. The teacher's and the school's ambitions for him are extensive: Wee Jimmy must give up *dugs* for all time and take to *dogs*. By doing this, however, he will separate himself from the style of speech of his parents, relatives and friends—forever. He is maybe fuzzy about this at first, but however fuzzy there is still a choice to be made: to go along with the teacher, or to resist. For this stage, around the age of nine onwards, I have a second apocryphal tale: same classroom, same lady teacher, same wall-chart, same pointer, same Wee Jimmy—but this time the pointer indicates a rather blank-looking animal with four legs, two horns and an udder:

"And what's that animal called, Jimmy?"
Pregnant pause
"That's a coo, Miss."
Frown.
"No, it is *not*. You know better than that, James.
It's *cow*!"
Wee Jimmy shakes his head, firmly.
"Naw. *You*'re a cow. That's a *coo*."

There is no record of what happened to our hero after he made this acute social comment. I have actually met a lot of Wee Jimmies around the world, both as children and adults, angry people from communities where special sets of values that are not their own have been pressed upon them in school or some similar institution. No doubt you have too. I have also known even more people who did not resist as such, but developed a skillful learning strategy that helped them, singly or in groups, to cope with authority and social manipulation. They create a kind of compromise situation. In Scotland this compromise is reflected in the distinction we make

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[2](1) See Piaget, above, Ch. 4.
(2) For a recent concise description of Piaget's triad of adaptation, assimilation and accommodation, see:
J.F. Travers—*The Growing Child: Introduction to Child Development* (New York & London: John Wiley, 1977: pp. 147-151)

between the "classroom language" and the "playground language". It is a form of what Charles Ferguson called *diglossia*[3] and what I would like to call here a kind of *tactical schizophrenia*: in one situation under one set of rules you behave in one way, and in another situation (sufficiently sharply distinguished from the first) you behave in quite a different way. The condition relates to what TESOL nowadays calls "the teaching of English as a second dialect", although in our case it was quite clearly "the teaching of English as a *higher* dialect".[4]

Where there are severe social differences (often also linked with regional, historical and political differences), the role of teacher as social engineer shades into the role of *teacher as judge and prosecutor* and finally the role of *teacher as social persecutor*. Worse, in situations where age-old resentments boil over into confrontation and even violence, roles can be reversed; the student-victim becomes the persecutor and the teacher-persecutor becomes the victim. There are many places that we all know where this kind of thing can and does happen.

One of the reasons for this happening can be illustrated by means of my third and final tale from Glasgow. In it we will assume that Wee Jimmy has submitted to pressure and now co-operates willingly in acquiring Standard English. Same classroom, same cast, but this time we can do without the pointer and the wall-chart. We have moved on to elocution, to the acquisition of a "good" or "proper" pronunciation. In particular, we are concerned with the glottal stop, which Glasgow people know be?er as the glo?al stop. This variant in our phonology is a cross we simply have to bear, a tribulation among life's many tribulations. A lot of time has been spent by pedagogues in the west of Scotland trying to eliminate the glottal stop, much as follows:

Teacher—	Come on, Jimmy. Say 'butter'.
Wee Jimmy—	Bu?er.
Teacher—	No, no. BU*TT*ER.
Wee Jimmy—	BU?ER!
Teacher—	BU*TT*ER! BU*TT*ER!
Wee Jimmy—	BU?ER! BU?ER!
Teacher—	Come on, Jimmy. You can do it. T. T. BU*T. T*ER. BU*TT*ER.
Wee Jimmy—	BU*TT*ER.
Teacher— (relaxing)	Ah, tha?'s be?er!

Certainly it's funny, but it is also a monument to our social and linguistic insecurities, the kind of thing that investigators like Fishman, Hymes and Labov have

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[3]See Charles Ferguson, Diglossia, in *Word* 15, 1959, pp. 325-340, reprinted in:
(1) Dell Hymes, Ed. *Language, Culture and Society* (New York: Harper & Row, 1964)
(2) Joshua Fishman, Ed. *Readings in the Sociology of Language* (The Hague: Mouton, 1968)

[4]I have looked more closely at the issue of "high" and "low" dialects in:
(1) Tom McArthur—The Status of English in and Furth of Scotland, in A. J. Aitken & Tom McArthur, Eds., *Languages of Scotland* (Edinburgh: Chambers, 1979: pp. 50-57)
(2) Tom McArthur—*A Foundation Course for Language Teachers* (Cambridge & New York: Cambridge University Press: 1983)
See also Fernando Penalosa, *Introduction to the Sociology of Language* (Rowley, Mass.: Newbury House, 1981, esp. Chs. 6-10).

in recent years described so well and discussed so fully.[5] Here, no matter how we assess the role of the student, we can see that the teacher is not just social engineer, judge, prosecutor and persecutor, but also in turn a kind of victim too, never quite able to sustain the model that he or she is required to sell. Such situations can lead too easily to an additional role: *teacher as hypocrite*.

These reminiscences are intended as it were to set the stage. They describe, graphically I hope, the central thesis of this paper: that in the normal course of events we teachers carry with us every day into the classroom certain ideologies, complete or fragmentary, willingly or with reservations. These include sets of roles and rules, value systems and worldviews that we communicate to our students through a variety of channels. They can be communicated by the kind of instructions we give and the style of language in which we couch those instructions; they can be communicated by the observations and asides that we make as we work, through our facial expressions, our body language, our stance, our movements, the way we position things in the room, the way we *use* things in the room, and *above all* by our choice and use of our teaching methods and materials.

We can discern four possibilities as regards these ideologies. Sometimes the ideology is *overt* and easy to perceive, as for example when there is a crucifix, motto or photograph of a great leader on the wall, or regular appeal is made to sacred scriptures, a social plan, or the aims of the organization that runs the school. Sometimes the ideology is *covert* and indirect, as for example in the inculcation of WASP norms in North America, or in implicit attitudes to the roles of females and males, or the prevalence of one kind of racial or class type in textbooks. Sometimes the ideology is *erratic* and ambiguous, as if there is confusion inside the teacher-ideologue. Many teachers are by no means clear about their ideologies or the messages they send. Additionally, students can get conflicting signals, as for example when a closet pacifist teaches in a military college, or a socialist teaches a course in free enterprise. Sometimes the situation is *confrontational*, where the teacher takes one stand and the institution or the materials or even the students take another. The pacifist comes out of the closet or the socialist may contrast his or her views with the text, or someone uses a text about tobacco, alcohol or coffee to make a personal declaration as an abstainer. A classroom, as we all very well know, can be a welter of bits and pieces of ideology, blatant or subtle, implicit or explicit, taken for granted or openly evangelical.

Clearly, this is an enormous subject, relating not just to language teaching but to all education and in the end to the whole human condition. I want to confine myself here, however, to certain aspects of general education and language teaching, and as a starting point I want to put forward two basic distinctions which, it seems to me, lie behind much of our thought and behaviour, without our ever spending much time considering them. They are built into the kind of society that we have inherited, and I will label them archetypally, as it were. The first of these archetypes is the Marketplace, and the second is the Monastery, and I want to talk as a consequence of our language-teaching work being influenced on the one hand by a *marketplace tradition* and on the other hand by a *monastery tradition*.[6]

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[5]The field is rich. See, among others, Fishman & Hymes as cited above, Ftn.[3], Peñalosa as cited above Ftn.[4], and William Labov *Sociolinguistic Patterns* (Philadelphis: The University Press, 1972).

[6]I have tried to describe the concept of the monastery and marketplace traditions in more detail in Ftn.[4](2) above.

The *marketplace tradition* relates to the rough and tumble of life, buying and selling, surviving, trading, travelling and somehow communicating wherever you go. Everything to do with it is dictated by simple necessity and is largely unstructured. It relates to shops, stalls, streets, bazaars, trading-posts, ports, all the places where people come together from diverse backgrounds and have somehow to deal with each other. In the great cosmopolitan cities of history—Babylon, Alexandria, Marseilles, London, New York—the procedures of the riverfront and warehouse have demanded quick practical answers to the problem of how to deal with speakers of other languages. Anything that works is welcome: a go-between if possible, gestures or pictures, your words or their words, your grammar or their grammar, anybody's words and anybody's grammar, in order to strike a bargain and get things moving. It is a makeshift system that has always worked well enough and in the process has given rise to trade jargons, camp languages, pidgins and creoles. These may be socially frowned on, but they are as alive as the merchants, hucksters, sailors, soldiers, whores and harbourmasters who use them. These *interlanguages* are vitally alive, and many a respectable and matronly modern language has something of this wild blood in its family line.[7]

By contrast, *the monastery tradition* describes a situation where education in general and language learning in particular occurred for formal social and cultural reasons, usually linked with a religion and promulgated in austere colleges where the sons of the socially elect gathered together to learn how to maintain their positions in society as priests, monks, civil servants, royal retainers, military officers and the like. They were fitted into box-like surroundings, organized in groups, homogenized as far as possible in terms of sex, age, place and time. The method is much the same whether it is the scribes of ancient Babylon and Egypt, the monks of mediaeval Europe, the brahmins of India, the teaching brotherhoods and sisterhoods of Catholic schools and missions, the one-sex staff of one-sex private schools or the co-educational day schools that we all know now. The containerization of life is unrelieved in such institutions: students working in small box-like cells or studies or in large box-like classrooms, their time divided up into box-like periods marked by the ringing of bells, strict discipline imposed on how they comport themselves while studying box-like books organized into box-like pages and chapters, containerized portions to be committed to memory and acted upon in appropriate ways.

The marketplace is full of passions, obsessions and strategies, but it has never provided a serious alternative to the ideological basis of the monastery tradition, which is, I would argue, the tradition in which *we* are, willingly or unwillingly, embedded. The very architecture within which we work expresses the fundamental ideology of containerization, a highly efficient means of processing human beings for particular purposes, and one which we would find very difficult indeed to dismantle if we ever wanted to do so. Indeed, the annual TESOL convention is a masterpiece of organization built largely upon the foundation of the monastery tradition; speakers are out front or up high, at table or lectern, committed to time-slots and measured doses of knowledge that are offered to recipients carrying

[7] There have been a number of excellent recent studies of pidgin and creole languages. See, in particular:
Dell Hymes Ed.—*Pidginization and Creolization of Languages* (Cambridge & New York: Cambridge University Press, 1971)
A. Valdman Ed.—*Pidgin and Creole Languages* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1977)
Derek Bickerton—*Dynamics of a Creole System* (Cambridge & New York: Cambridge University Press, 1975)

schedules all neatly laid out in rectangles that specify who does what, where, and at what time. Only in the area allocated to the publishers do we to some extent get away from this ancient order into a more fluid bazaar-like atmosphere, and there is still a certain reserve in organizations like TESOL as regards the commercial people out there, a kind of necessary evil, vaguely lowering the academic tone.

I have mentioned these two traditions in order to highlight the existence of a containerizing educational process that expanded out of ancient religious and élitist origins into a worldwide network of schools and colleges. Many of us firmly believe that these schools and colleges are devoted to universal education and to the pursuit of both excellence and happiness. Wee Jimmy had to operate in just such a system with his *dugs, coos* and glottal stops, and found the dice weighted against him. I would now like to look at this system in a way that, I admit, is almost imbecile in its simplicity, by saying that the whole of the monastery tradition is founded on four things that many of us might feel are hardly worth discussing: a container called a "classroom", an authority figure once called a "master" or "mistress" but now usually just a "teacher", one or more trainees originally called "disciples" but now known as either "pupils" or "students", and finally some set of "materials" through which the teacher can ameliorate the condition of the students.

My argument at this stage is that every teacher who has ever had to work in a classroom has an ideology, however unexamined, of how things ought to *be* in that classroom, and every educational institution has an ideology as regards classrooms, corridors, play places and so on. Much of the teacher's ideology derives somewhat incestuously from his or her previous experience of classrooms and schools (but on the other side of things, as a student), and so the teacher is often, inevitably, perpetuating an undiscussed tradition, simply accepting things as they are.

Not always, of course. There are different ideologies of classroom behaviour and organization, and it seems to me reasonable here to see these ideologies in terms of how any teacher organizes the essential facts of life in the classroom, inside his or her own head. In simple logical terms, there are six basic sequences in which the three fundamentals of the classroom can be arranged:

1 teacher first—students second—materials third
2 teacher first—materials second—students third
3 students first—teacher second—materials third
4 students first—materials second—teacher third
5 materials first—teacher second—students third
6 materials first—students second—teacher third

These are six systems of linear priority, and each is worth a little study. Something like them lies at the heart of many individual approaches to teaching, or animates whole methodologies, especially in our business of language teaching. Thus, traditional monastery methodology has tended to emphasize *the teacher as authorized dispenser of knowledge* to fortunate and dutiful students with the aid of a book or books (Style 1); or, the same teacher reveals the content of a venerated book or books to a set of students who may or may not be worthy to receive that knowledge (Style 2). A contrasting more modern approach foregrounds the students in open-plan activities, learning together with the *teacher in the role of the Friend-Who-Knows*, using a variety of aids (Style 3); or, the free-and-easy students exploit various well-organized and often disposable materials while the *teacher* hovers here and there *in the role of resource person* (Style 4). In certain other situations, such as

in the military or certain kinds of factory work or professional training, there is a job to be done with certain kinds of equipment which is of paramount interest, an instructor is there to inculcate the necessary skills and certain learners are there to acquire those skills, and if they don't then others will (Style 5); or, such skills may be approached as a kind of immersion procedure with the students learning by trial and error, and the teacher is there simply to limit mistakes and damage (Style 6).

These permutations have their defenders and their opponents, and express value systems, especially as regards the first elements: who or what comes first in the classroom, where the priorities lie. How can we, however, translate these styles or models into the immediate world of language-teaching methodology? Without enormous difficulty, I would argue, as follows:

1 > These are the dominant styles in traditional grammar-translation as well
2 > as in traditional structuralism, where the teacher leads and the students follow, using materials from which little deviation is permitted, and where in fact the teacher hardly ever improvizes, being instead the vehicle for the transmission of an approved body of information by approved means.

3 > These are the dominant styles in traditional direct-method courses as well
4 > as in situational courses and are certainly significant in the communicative approach, where the teacher decreases his or her status as an authority figure and interweaves with students at work on a wide range of possible materials, often improvizing along the way and encouraging novelty and originality (moving indeed as far as possible in the direction of the marketplace as the constraints of the monastery permit).

5 > These styles are dominant here and there in all methods and approaches,
6 > as for example when publishers and educational systems prepare "teacher-proof" materials that are more important than the teachers (who may be considered insufficiently skilled in the target language or the methods used); or, in such settings as the language laboratory where everyone is subordinate to the equipment and the software to be used; or, again, in a military situation where large numbers of trained personnel are needed, skilled in a particular language, and assembly line techniques predominate.

These six are not the only possible permutations. People may dislike the idea of linearity or priority, and instead try to group the three elements together in a cluster that requires no predetermined dominance (or at least seeks to conceal any such dominance), thus:

7

Teacher
Students
Materials

The implicit message here is: "We all matter equally, you, me and the book, regardless of any impressions to the contrary". Such a style has pleasing overtones of democracy; it is relaxed, humane and indeed humanistic, and can be used by a sympathetic teacher in any of the modes of language teaching: grammar-translation, direct method, structuralism, situationalism or the communicative notional-functional approach. Its detractors, however, see it as risking an anarchic free-for all, admitting too much of the world into the seclusion of the monastery.

Our schools and colleges today, I would propose, tend to suffer because we are

not very good at reconciling monastery and marketplace: we try to soften the old authoritarianism and discover permissiveness, we recoil from permissiveness and rediscover the basics; we worry about whether we should offer academic courses to all, or vocational employment-oriented courses to all, or how to vary the mix without turning some people into smug elitists and others into angry underdogs. It is no surprise that many of our schools serve as battle-grounds between the two traditions rather than as centres of education, creating very considerable ideological and social confusion. In our profession particularly, we are caught between *conservative* language-teaching methods on the one hand and *radical* language-teaching approaches on the other: There are the teachers who favour explicit grammar, direct translation, rules, rote learning, deductive reasoning, written work, literary emphases, language history, and standard language on the one side, and teachers who favour implicit grammar or no organized grammar at all, immersion, free-wheeling, problem-solving and "authentic" language, inductive reasoning, oral work, vocational and social emphases, contemporary usage, and dialect and informal language on the other side. They are often antagonistic, argumentative and even arrogant towards each other, each having a conviction that they possess the true apostolic position.

Piaget asserts that children—and the adults that children become—value a feeling of equilibrium in their understanding of the world they live in, and that a feeling of *dis*equilibrium disturbs them and makes them search for a fresh balance and understanding. This describes pretty well how I have felt as a language teacher over the last twenty years or so, and my own suggestion as regards our models of how classrooms work is very much an attempt to achieve equilibrium. Most of us would recognize nowadays that there are very few panaceas in our profession. Proponents of THE way to salvation in the teaching of a foreign language are greeted more and more skeptically as time passes. We are approaching satiation as regards claims about new methods and approaches that ask us to abandon earlier methods and approaches that we know were flawed but were not necessarily all bad. My own inclination here is towards a rationally and emotionally satisfying approach to both methods and materials, and towards the student-teacher relationship. The classroom with all its strengths and weaknesses won't go away, and as a consequence I want to turn the six models of linear priority and the seventh model of teacher, student and materials all clustered together into a circle model, a rotating device where the strengths of all these models can be used and their weaknesses minimized. Imagine then a kind of triangle with the teacher at one point, students at another and materials at a third, but the possibility of rotating that triangle in any direction, thus:

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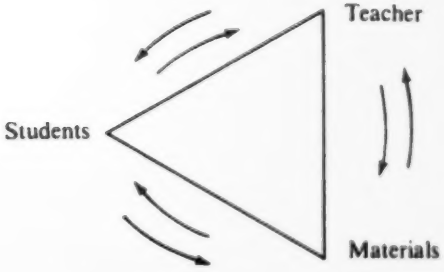

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In an approach like this, which is in fact a stylization of something I conceive as much more fluid, no component is permanently dominant. Each can rotate into primary position as the need for it arises, permitting us to vary our work more consciously and also to take into account students' attention spans more coherently. For certain purposes, the teacher can perform in front of the class in such roles as *fountain-of-truth, actor, policeman, judge,* even sometimes as a *persecutor pushing the students for all they are worth.* At other times the materials and equipment can come to the fore (film, tapes, language laboratory, television, computer, whatever) doing work that teachers cannot do, providing variety that no individual teacher can ever provide, offering an accuracy that no single human being can match. At still other times, the students are in the foreground of things, released from a single focus, on teacher, book or machine, taking on a variety of roles in their turn, maybe even taking over the classroom and making a lot of noise, or organized in groups of various sizes for various purposes with a variety of improvized materials, games, songs, dramas, dialogues, situations whether simulated or authentic, and from time to time spilling out of the classroom into the marketplace to try their skills.[8]

Models like these are only aids, descriptive devices for various patterns and tendencies in what we do. There is no ultimate truth in what I'm describing here; an explicit attempt, however, to talk about how we conceive our classrooms may do no harm and may even do some good. If one is going to have ideological attitudes, they might as well be as coherent to us as possible, *and subject to overt examination.* The result might be a more truly humane approach to education in general and language education in particular. I suspect Wee Jimmy would have preferred things that way, in a world where he would be allowed both dogs *and* dugs.

[8]The triangular model proposed here appears in *A Foundation Course for Language Teachers*, Tom McArthur, Cambridge University Press, 1983 (p. 87) A similar, but "immobile" triangle can be found on p. 100 of an article by Julian Dakin entitled – The Teaching of Reading in *Applied Linguistics and the Teaching of English*, Hugh Fraser and W. R. O'Donnell (Eds.), Longmans, London, 1969. A more complex version of the Dakin triangle is in R.J. Handscombe. 1975. The Sunrunners: ESL by TV for grade 3 in Ontario. *TESOL Quarterly* 9: 3:289-98.